

# Maximize Your CACFP Reimbursement



This educational packet contains a 7-page study guide, as well as a self-test/training certificate, which fulfills **two hours of training**. You are expected to review the enclosed materials thoroughly prior to completing the self-test. Answers to all the questions are contained in the accompanying study-guide.

If you have any questions as to the proper use of this packet, please contact our office and we will be glad to assist you.

**Patti Elste, Nutrition Director  
Illinois Child Care Bureau  
10500 W Cermak Road  
Westchester, IL 60154  
708-397-2295**

As your food program sponsor, ICCB is responsible for training you, as a participating day care provider, in the regulations of the CACFP and assisting you in obtaining the greatest cash reimbursement to which you are entitled. This has become increasingly more challenging over the past few years. New regulations set forth by the USDA and the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) have become progressively more burdensome for us to administer as well as more difficult for you to comply with. However, the good news is that the CACFP is still available to all licensed and license exempt providers along with its many benefits; the main one being that young children are receiving more nutritious meals and developing healthier eating habits to last a lifetime.

This training packet contains valuable tips that will assist you in securing your maximum reimbursement each month. Yes, you must attend to the small details but this attention will only enhance your ability to provide the highest quality nutrition to young children in your care on a daily basis.



### ..... Reimbursement Tip #1.....

#### **“Check Your Claim Summary and Errors Letter”**

Each month, approximately **70%** of our providers make one or more errors on their menus, attendance and child enrollment forms that result in a loss of reimbursement. Sometimes the same error(s) is repeated month after month. When an error is made it will appear on your Claim Summary and Errors Report. It is extremely important to review this report and take action to correct the oversight that resulted in the deduction.

#### How do I find this report?

**Online Claimers:** Once your menu is processed you can access this report on your Minute Menu account by going to Review Claims. Double click on the desired month and then under Choose a Report click Claim Summary and Error Letter.

**Scannable Menus:** You will receive the Errors Letter with your reimbursement check.

Be sure to take your time to:

- 1) Read the comments detailed on the review.
- 2) Check your menus and/or Child Enrollment Forms to see if you understand the comment and resulting deduction.
- 3) Call the ICCB office for clarification if necessary.
- 4) Take measures to correct the oversight and avoid future deductions.

Your program advisor will review your errors with you at her visits. However, these reviews are only a few times per year. If you do not take responsibility to check your errors and make corrections, the loss of reimbursement will add up to a significant level over time.



..... Reimbursement Tip # 2 .....

**“Get Child Enrollment Forms in On Time”**

The very latest that we can accept a child registration form is with your menu, *if you use the scannable menu forms*. If you claim online, the enrollment forms should be received before your menu is processed. For example, you submit your November menu before December 5. It will typically be processed on December 6<sup>th</sup>. If a child is still pending when your menu is processed, meaning that a parent signed enrollment has not been received, you will not be reimbursed for that child for the entire month.

How do I know if a child is still pending?

When you go to record your attendance on Minute Menu, if there is a “P” in the column after the child’s name, under “STAT”, the child is still pending. **Do not submit your menu!!!!** If you are certain that you faxed or mailed this form to us, then call the office to check on it. If you neglected to submit the form, then do so immediately. When the form is received, the “P” will be updated to an “A” for **Active**. Then it is safe to submit your menu. Once a menu is processed, adjustments cannot be made.

You may fax CE forms to our office. However, in so doing, please call us to make sure that the form(s) was received and so we can check it for legibility. The fax copy must be legible and easy to read or it will not be accepted.

**FYI** - In an average month as many as 60 – 80 providers lose reimbursement for children whose enrollment forms have not been received. The loss of reimbursement for a Tier 1 child claimed for breakfast, lunch and a snack, all month, is approximately \$89.32. If the child is claimed for lunch, dinner and a snack, the loss is \$111.76.



..... Reimbursement Tip # 3 .....

**“Review Child Registration Forms for Accuracy”**

The information recorded on the CR forms will determine your eligibility for reimbursement for that child. The following are common and costly oversights:

➤ ***The hours of care documented on the CR form are extremely important.***

In order to claim a child for a particular meal, the hours must show the child present within the meal or snack service time frame.

For example: A child’s CR states he arrives at 8:30 am and your breakfast serving time is 7:30 – 8:30 am. You will not be eligible to receive reimbursement for breakfast for that child because he arrives after your breakfast service time frame.

- **Only meals/snacks that the parent indicates the child receives while in your care are reimbursable.**

If, the parent indicated on the CR that the child receives AM snack, lunch, and PM snack, you cannot be reimbursed for breakfast or dinner, if you attempt to claim them.

- **Be aware of the enrollment date indicated for the child.**

The enrollment date should not be later than the first day the child is in your care. Reimbursement cannot be paid for days prior to the enrollment date.

- **Days of care**

If the parent indicates that the child is only in your care on Tuesdays and Thursdays, reimbursement cannot be paid if this child is claimed on Monday, Wednesday or Friday.

**FYI** - In an average month, 25% of ICCB providers lose reimbursement because of information on child enrollment forms that should be updated.

*Don't fall into this category!* It is well worth your time to check over your enrollment forms and update as necessary. However, this updated information cannot be applied to a menu that has already been processed. It will become effective with your next menu.

#### TO UPDATE AN ENROLLMENT:

Online Claimers: Print out the form, make the necessary changes on the paper, have the parent sign it and then fax or mail it to the ICCB office. After a few days, *and definitely before you submit your menu*, check the child information in Minute Menu to make sure the appropriate updates have been applied.

Scannable menu users: A new enrollment must be completed.



### ..... Reimbursement Tip # 4.....

#### **“For School Aged Children, Indicate When They are Off School”**

If you don't let us know when a school aged child is in your care all day, reimbursement cannot be paid.

Scannable menu users: Indicate on your CIF (Claim Information Form) which children are “*off school*” on which days. Use the back of the form if you need additional space. Just make sure that it is very clear who was “off” when.

Online claimers: Online claimers have a choice as to how they wish to indicate this.

- 1) Mark the “no school” box next to the attendance box when you record the child's attendance for each meal or snack.
- 2) Record the days off on each child's individual calendar.  
*This is a more time effective method when the child is off school for a number of days such as when on vacation, etc.*

Click on Children on the toolbar at the top of the screen when you are on the home page of your Minute Menu account. Click on Manage Child Calendar. Select the desired child and mark the days the child is off school by dragging the school out icon to that date or (if using Minute Menu Kids) highlighting the date and then clicking on the School Out box.

**FYI** - Once again, too many providers routinely experience this deduction. Last fiscal year, a total of 647 providers lost reimbursement for not indicating days off school at one point or another. This resulted in a grand total of 14,367 disallow errors. If the disallowances were all lunch meals at Tier 1 rates, this oversight adds up to a loss in reimbursement of \$31,751.00 or on average \$49.00 per affected provider.

If you know that there have been days off school, double check to make sure you have indicated this for all children involved before you submit your menus.



..... Reimbursement Tip # 5 .....

### **“Meals and Snacks Must Have Prior Approval”**

At the time you are approved to claim on the food program, the meals and snacks that you plan to claim for your daycare are entered into the system and you are approved to claim these meals. However, if at a later time you add a meal service, you must notify the ICCB office, in writing upon your decision to do so.

For example, you are not approved to claim dinner, yet just this month, you have started serving this meal to several children in your care. You must submit, in writing, by email, fax or snail mail, a notice to the ICCB office that you have added a dinner service. It must be received in the ICCB office by the 25<sup>th</sup> of the month that you first start claiming it. On your notice, please indicate:

- 1 – The meal or snack you wish to add.
- 2 - The time frame for this meal or snack.
- 3 - The month in which you plan to begin the new meal service.

If you claim an unapproved meal/snack, deductions will be made for the entire month for all children you have claimed for that meal or snack.

**Online Claimers:** If you are approved for meals and snacks, the approved time will automatically be in the Minute Menu system. If a meal or snack is not approved, the system will ask you to enter a time frame. This is a HUGE clue that you are not approved for that particular meal or snack because if you were approved, the time frame would already be there.

**Scannable Menu Users:** In the lower right hand corner of your Claim Information Form (CIF) is an area where your Meal Times are indicated. If there is not a time listed alongside a particular meal or snack, you are not approved to claim it and you must follow the above procedure.



..... Reimbursement Tip # 6.....

**“The All Important 2 Hour Rule”**

There must be at least **2 hours** between the start of one meal service and the start of the next. If you list an **8 am breakfast, 10 am snack** and **11:30 lunch**, you are not in compliance with this regulation because there is only 1 ½ hours between the start of your AM snack and the start of lunch. *You will lose all AM snacks claimed for the entire month.* Remember, it is 2 hours from the begin time, not the end time. If you list your breakfast as served between 8 – 9 am, a 10 am snack is still acceptable.

Since we will not approve you for meal time frames that are not 2 hours apart, this type of deduction does not occur too often. However, if you decide to change a meal time frame OR serve a meal at two different times (*a shifted meal or snack*), it is more likely that such an error will occur.



..... Reimbursement Tip # 7.....

**“Claim Infants”**

Several years back, the regulations regarding infants changed significantly. Currently, you are required to offer to provide an iron fortified infant formula (IFIF) to all infants in your care, *whether or not you claim them*. A child enrollment form must also be completed and the name of this formula must be recorded on the CE form in the designated location. Finally, the parent must indicate if they will accept the offered formula or bring their own.

**After doing all this work, you may as well claim the infant!** *AND the good news is that you can claim the infant even if the parent is providing the formula.*

***We encourage you to do so!***

Call us if you are unsure of the infant guidelines. The infant meal pattern is quite simple and we will gladly review the requirements with you. In your Provider Guidebook is the Infant Meal Pattern Chart, sample menu and additional instruction. Start claiming those infants and increase your reimbursement.



..... Reimbursement Tip # 8 .....

**“Keep Meal and Attendance Records DAILY!”**

This regulation has been in effect for as long as the food program has been in existence. Providers who are claiming on the food program, must be able to show that they have recorded the attendance of the children claimed at each meal as well as the food items that were served to them.

Following are some questions that you may have regarding this matter:

1 – My computer crashed!!!! All of my information has been lost.

This is not possible. Your computer may crash, but your meal and attendance information, once entered and saved in Minute Menu is **not** lost.

Minute Menu is an internet-based system so even if your computer crashes your data can be accessed by going to [www.minutemenu.com](http://www.minutemenu.com) from any working computer. You will need your login and password, so it is recommended that you keep this on file in a safe place other than your computer.

2 – My internet has not worked for a week and I could not enter my menus.

We strongly urge you to print out some copies of your Daily Meal Worksheet when your Internet and computer are both working properly. This form is available by going to your Minute Menu account to Reports / Claim / Daily Meal Worksheet.

Print out several of these forms for emergency purposes. Your enrolled children’s names are listed and there is room for you to mark their attendance accordingly and to record the meal or snack served. Once your internet is functional, you can enter your data from these Daily Meal Worksheets.

These worksheets must be utilized for any reason that you are unable to enter your claiming information into the Minute Menu system. Print some out today!!!

3 - My assistant is supposed to be entering my meals and attendance into the computer. I did not know that my records were not up to date.

If you delegate this task to an assistant, you are still responsible for making sure that it is done.

4 - I ran out of menu forms! (*A scannable menu user.*)

Keep track of your inventory of these forms. Remember that one sheet only holds three days worth of claiming information. Call the ICCB office immediately when you notice that you are low.

When your program advisor or an Illinois State Board of Education monitor conducts a home review, you must be up to date on your menus or you will not be reimbursed for the missing dates. This can cost you hundreds of dollars in one month, depending how far behind you are. Make daily record keeping a habit!



..... Reimbursement Tip # 9 .....

**“Meals and attendance recorded must match that of your Program Advisor when she conducts a review”**

When your program advisor conducts a home review, she may observe you serve a meal or snack to the daycare children. Be especially observant of the food items and the corresponding numbers that are listed on the home visit form.

The attendance and meal information recorded on the home visit form is entered into the computer and checked, electronically, against your menu. If this does not match, the meal is disallowed for all of the children to whom it was served.

So, you may correctly assume, a hot dog is a hot dog! However, if your PA (program advisor) records that you served beef franks (01) and you enter that you served pork franks (145), then you may not be paid for this meal for all of the children for whom you claimed it.

Also, if you claim children and the PA has not recorded them in attendance on her home visit form, you will not be reimbursed for their meal or snack. Make sure that you inform your program advisor if children will be arriving to eat the observed meal or some have already eaten and left.



..... Reimbursement Tip # 10 .....

**“Are you Moving?”**

Every month, your information is compared to that on the latest DCFS data that we have received. If you have moved, your new address must be in the DCFS data or a “pending address change” status indicated, in order for us to be able to reimburse you.

Be sure, *if you have moved*, that you have completed the necessary paperwork for DCFS and make sure that your DCFS representative understands that your food program reimbursement is dependant on the updated information being entered into the DCFS database. When addresses do not match, this is a very costly loss of reimbursement for you.



..... Reimbursement Tip # 11 .....

**“Read the ICCB Family Day Care News”**

The newsletter is mailed to you each month and is also available to read online at our website, [www.illinoischildren.com](http://www.illinoischildren.com). It is short and to the point and it will only take you a few minutes to read. It is the major way we communicate changes in regulations, policies and procedures that can affect your reimbursement.



..... Reimbursement Tip # 12 .....

**“Look over your menus before submitting them.”**

Especially, if you use the scannable menu forms the following is important:

“Have I included child enrollment forms for new children starting this month?”

“Have I bubbled in the correct child numbers for each child?”

“Have I bubbled in the correct dates and not duplicated any dates.”

“Are my food items recorded? In other words, there are no missing menus?”

“Is attendance recorded for each meal and or snack claimed.”

“If there were days off school, are these dates listed for the children involved?”

**“Learn and practice these tips and you are on your way to receiving the maximum CACFP reimbursement to which you are entitled each month!”**

